

The NCS-based Qualification System: Diagnosis and Future Tasks for Improvement

Dong-Im Lee, Jeong Yoon Cho, Ji Wun Jung

In order to develop a field-oriented qualification system as a part of efforts to push for President Park Geun-hye's state affairs, National Competency Standards(NCS) was developed in accordance to which, the qualification system has been reformed. However, as the new qualification system is in its initial stage of implementation, the systematic structure of 'qualification planning - qualification operation - qualification utilization' based on NCS is not stable yet and thus the system is being implemented on a trial-and-error basis. Revealing its limitations, the qualification system has not been diagnosed in a systematic manner.

One of the goals of this study is to diagnose whether the NCS-based qualification system is being operated fulfilling its original purposes and whether the qualification management and operation system is in place supporting smooth application of the qualification system in the labor market. The study also aims to analyze the problems arising in the process of carrying out the system and to come up with tasks for improvement.

In order to achieve these goals, comprehensive reviews were made on a variety of literatures and diverse study approaches were adopted including interviewing experts, conducting surveys, visiting educational institutions and industrial fields and holding policy seminars.

This study deals mainly with the followings. First, the theoretical background is reviewed concerning 'diagnosis of the NCS-based qualification system'. As for domestic implementation of NCS-based qualifications policies, the current state and recent developments are analyzed, while analysis results and implications of qualification policies in major foreign nations are also examined. With a view to establish an analysis framework for NCS-based qualifications policies, comprehensive reviews are made to find out the background and analysis

methods of other policies. In addition, based on the new framework, the NCS-based qualification policies implemented so far are assessed with their problems identified and future policy tasks are suggested to solve the problems. The policy tasks proposed by this study are as below.

1. Reform of the Qualifications Management and Support System

First of all, the roles of the Qualification Policy Deliberation Council and the National Technical Qualifications Policy Deliberation Council should be redefined. In other words, they need to go beyond the role of a policy coordination organization and make efforts to establish a more integrated framework for management and deliberation of qualifications. Second, in order to increase the policy efficacy the ministries and departments concerned, which are upper level policy enforcing organizations, should strive for cooperation and the possibility of integration, if necessary, should be reviewed. Third, effectiveness of NCS-based qualifications and policies should be raised and the service areas of the Human Resources Development Service of Korea should be reallocated. Fourth, although ISC is important and necessary, it is required to carry out an objective evaluation on whether ISC is able to properly carry out its currently commissioned works such as surveying and analyzing the current state and demand of human resources by industry, planning and operating qualifications, and establishing certification standards for the course-based evaluation qualifications and the work-based learning system. If needed, the ISC should be restructured which requires a prior evaluation on appropriateness of its sphere of activities and size of the organization. Fifth, it is also advised to make a review on introduction of a performance-based financial support system in order to promote healthy growth of the ISC.

2. Reform of the Qualifications Operation System

Most importantly, it is required to prepare a basic philosophy to operate NCS-based qualifications (especially the course-based evaluation qualifications). If the course-based evaluation qualifications are to become competency-oriented qualifications based on the NCS, corporate participation on operation of the qualification system is mandatory, which means field practicum should be included as part of the education program for acquisition of qualifications.

Second, in order to make the course-based evaluation qualifications more field-oriented, the qualification subjects should be replaced with the NCS-based new job qualifications subjects designed by the industry. Third, the course-based evaluation qualification system integrates the education and training courses into the existing test-based qualification system mainly operated by the Ministry of Employment and Labor. This integration implies that internal evaluation has become critical requiring enrichment in education programs. For this purpose, it is urgent to prepare competency evaluation standards, enhance objectivity of internal evaluation results, minimize gaps among students in different education organizations, improve internal evaluation manuals, strengthen competence of internal evaluators and establish a system for management of internal evaluation results. Fourth, as NCS-based qualifications should have evaluation tools conforming to performance criteria, it is needed to verify that the external evaluation conforms to performance criteria. In addition, a verification process should be put in place in order to find out whether the evaluation tool and the NCS performance criteria are valid, sufficient and field-oriented. Fifth, in the mid-to long-term, the current external evaluation system should be transformed into an evaluation verification system. In more detail, external evaluators should focus more on checking if the education and training organization is strictly carrying out internal evaluation, if a re-education system for internal evaluation dropouts is in operation and if the evaluation evidence materials based on the performance criteria is appropriate, rather than focusing on evaluating learners. For this, it is desirable that high performing organizations should take the initiative in changing the external evaluation into external verification. Sixth, the monitoring should be conducted in a more detailed way. That is, the monitoring should be more concentrated on checking whether internal evaluations are carried out fulfilling the desired achievements defined in the NCS performance criteria and particular consulting services should be provided to poorly performing organizations. Seventh, it is required to seek ways to simplify administrative works of those education and training organizations operating the course-based evaluation qualifications. Eighth, a consultation body representing relevant organizations should be established to further develop course-based evaluation qualifications.

3. Reform of the Qualification Utilization System

First, monitoring should be regularly conducted on the current state of utilization of NCS-based qualifications in the labor market and the achievements of the qualifications, shown in a scientific manner, should be analyzed. Second, various infrastructures should be established to find out whether the course-based evaluation qualifications are making positive effects in the labor market than test-based qualifications. The qualifications achievement analysis results should be considered in the process of pursuing financial support projects of ISC promoting its active participation in operation of the course-based evaluation qualification system based on NCS.